

Will Muschamp and Bryan McClendon Press Conference – 1/5/18 – McClendon
Hired as Offensive Coordinator

Opening Statement...

WILL MUSCHAMP (WM): “I’ve got two announcements today. Obviously, we are promoting Bryan McClendon to offensive coordinator. He will continue to coach receivers. In his two years here at South Carolina, he’s been outstanding. You see the rapport he has with our staff, with our players, how he positively affects everybody in our organization.

“It was very easy to see that when I wanted to go in a different direction for the bowl game. In talking to Bryan, I said ‘listen, I just want to be balanced, I want to dictate the tempo of the game, and I want to be aggressive.’ And he did all three things. He took it and ran with it. The command that he had with our staff, with our players, was outstanding. The leadership ability that he has, as a coordinator and a future head coach, is obvious to me. There is a reason Georgia named him interim head coach in the bowl game (in 2015), because the kids believe in his leadership abilities and the example he sets for young people. I am excited about it.

“I thought the biggest question, obviously was game day. The guy has never called a game, so how is that going to go against the best defense we’ve played this year? I thought it went really well. I thought our plan was good. Obviously, in the first part of the game, we had a hard time blocking them. Just call it like it is. In protection and in the run game, the adjustments made at halftime to change protections, which we did more seven-man protections to get the ball vertically down the field, more quick game, and to stay with the tempo, which was affecting them defensively. Again, (he was) calm, cool and collected the entire time. I was extremely impressed with how he managed the situation and how we were able to adjust. I know that in his first game calling a game, he did a lot better than a lot of proven coordinators. I can tell you that, so I am excited about that and excited about our room.

“I have great belief in Bryan and our entire offensive staff. Bobby Bentley will go back to coaching running backs. He did a fantastic job in the bowl game with Jake (Bentley), and Jake played at a high level. Bobby is more than qualified to be a quarterback coach at South Carolina and a coordinator. The guy is an outstanding coach. Eric Wolford, Pat Washington – those guys have done a fantastic job for us.

“I am going to name Dan Werner as our quarterbacks coach. Through this process, I talked to a lot of people. I interviewed Dan one-on-one, and then I brought him to Columbia for a day of bowl practice. He and Bryan hit it off, and I saw that this was going to be able to work. Dan has a wealth of experience and knowledge as a play-caller and as a developer of quarterbacks. I called Nick (Saban). He is presently at Alabama in an off-the-field role. I called Nick, and there’s nobody I have more respect for and his opinion, and (he said) how much Dan has helped their offense this year with, schematically, some things that are very similar to what we do, which excited me.

“In 2015, I was the defensive coordinator at Auburn. We played Ole Miss. Dan was the coordinator and the play-caller. They had 558 yards, and that hasn’t happened to us very often. They were creative. They played with a lot of tempo. They were aggressive. They had good players. They were coached extremely well. I was more than impressed with Dan.

“As a coach, you always have a short list of guys that impressed you, and he certainly did. Then you go back and look at the research and the development at the quarterback position of (former Ole Miss quarterbacks) Bo Wallace and Chad Kelly. They set numerous records at Ole Miss, which has had some great quarterback play. You go back to Miami; he was part of three national championships. He coached a Heisman Trophy winner in Gino Torretta and also a Maxwell Award winner in Ken Dorsey. His track record speaks for itself.

“His experience – I am really excited about this combination. When I was a coordinator for a lot of years at a high level, I always had sounding boards in the room, because the game plan process is ‘how are you going to attack an offense or a defense?’ The situational football that always comes up is discussed through that week before game day. There is no question that Dan is going to be an outstanding sounding board for Bryan in that room, along with another outstanding offensive staff that we have here at South Carolina.

“I don’t have any announcements on the 10th coach. That will be made next week. We’re still working through that and talking to some other people. Right now, roster-wise, I think we are in good shape, as far as no defections or anything like that at this time.”

On the team’s familiarity with Coach McClendon and how that factored into the decision to name him offensive coordinator...

WM: “Again, you don’t make a decision based on comfort. You make a decision on what you think is the best fit and the best hire for the University of South Carolina. That’s what I did. You can see the belief I have in him and the job he’s going to do and how he positively affects our players, which I think is really important. Continuity I do think is good, but we will tweak and change what we do based on what our players do best. Bryan’s committed to doing that. We’re not going to get into specifics of that, but obviously moving forward with our offensive staff getting into spring ball and those things to what our players do best. We lose Alan Knott, Cory Helms and Hayden Hurst, as far as three guys that played a considerable amount. Certainly, the verbiage in things will be good for some continuity.”

On the changes he plans to implement in the offense moving forward...

BRYAN McCLENDON (BM): “I think it’s all just a buy-in to everything we’ve got going on here South Carolina as a team. One of the biggest things that Coach Muschamp always talks about is effort, toughness and discipline. I think on offense we want to lead the country in effort, toughness and discipline. I think it all goes

throughout the whole team aspect. Coach said it best; it's not like we're going to reinvent the wheel offensively or anything like that. One thing that we have to do is do a great job of giving our players the best chance to be successful. I think that's all any coach can be asked to do. Coach mentioned the bowl game; we were having some problems protecting them or even blocking them, just flat-out blocking them. We had to change some things in order to help the guys get in front of them a little bit better. If that means adding another guy in on protection, or things like that, then that's what we have to do. That's what we're constantly going to be trying to do, is getting creative and giving our guys ways to succeed."

On improving the offensive line...

BM: "It's important. Not to say there aren't great defensive lines everywhere, but I think one of the things that separates the SEC from a lot of other conferences. They're so good at the line of scrimmage defensively. That's one thing that you better have shored up. We've got to do a great job – one – just like anything else in any part of a college program, you've got to recruit well. That's going to be the main focus of what we're doing, especially in these few weeks coming up. We get a chance to get ahead on those 2019 prospects. We've got to take advantage of that. That's going to be the number one thing, recruiting well. Other than that, we've got to do a great job of mixing things up, changing up snap counts or doing whatever we've got to do to give our guys the best chance to compete at a high level up front."

On choosing to stay at South Carolina...

BM: Coach (Muschamp) and I had a conversation right after the game. The plan was, I tell people this all the time: when we moved here from the University of Georgia, moving sucks. It's hard on the family; you're away from your family at certain points in time. We wanted to choose a place when we left where we felt like we could be there for a while. That's the reason why we're here. We didn't come here to try to bounce around or try to do a bunch of different things. We believe in South Carolina; that's why we're here and that's why we came here in the first place. To know that Coach has the trust in me to move up the ladder and promote me to offensive coordinator, it's invaluable. It means a lot to me. It means a lot to the family. Ultimately, we've got to do what's best for South Carolina. That's why we're here and that's what we're here to do."

On the offensive coaches that have influenced him during his career...

BM: "I've been really fortunate and blessed to work with a lot of good offensive coaches. I came up and cut my teeth under Coach (Mark) Richt. I think he's a very bright offensive coach. He believes in teaching. He believes in not just coaching and not just doing things, but teaching the how to do certain things. Mike Bobo I think is a very good offensive coach. Brian Schottenheimer and Kurt Roper. You learn something from everyone that you deal with. I think that the biggest thing that I've learned the most since I've been here is going up against Coach Muschamp and (Travaris Robinson's) defense every day. You're talking about one of the best defensive minds in college football that you get to go up against every single day. It's really good, because it's not like he's just coming out trying to attack you. He says,

'Hey, why don't you guys try this? This gives us problems,' and things like that that kind of help you along. That's where I've learned the most in the past few years.

On when Dan Werner will begin working at South Carolina...

WM: "He will be with Alabama (for the CFP National Championship Game). He'll be here the night of the 10th and start work on the 11th."

On the hiring timeline...

WM: "Again, it goes back to (how) it's not about comfort. It's about the best decision. This was the best decision for us. I felt that way after the (Outback Bowl) game. I wanted to sleep on it a night to make sure, again, that I'm making the best decision for South Carolina. It's not about comfort; it's about the best foot moving forward. There was no question that Bryan (McClendon) was the guy. I called him the next morning, and we talked and had a great conversation. Steve Fink wanted to have a press conference on Friday, so there you go."

On Bryan McClendon's play-calling in the Outback Bowl...

WM: "Again, I think that was the biggest question mark I had. Obviously, all the other qualities I was looking for were there. You see the adjustments and the things that he did on game day were really good. It made my comfort level go much higher. I don't see this as a gamble at all. I see this as very sure, good decision for our program."

On hiring someone with play-calling experience...

WM: "I talked to a lot of people through the month of December. I watched a lot of film. To me, your film is your résumé as a coach. I watched a lot of people and saw different things that different people were doing. I felt like this could've gone in any different direction."

On coaching from the booth at the Outback Bowl as opposed to being on the field...

BM: "I think it was different. You could definitely see everything a little bit. It's kind of similar to watching it on TV. You know what's going to happen, or think you know or hope you know what's going to happen. I think who's up and who's down and all of that other stuff, it really goes into the dynamic of that staff at the time. You want somebody that can always rally the troops down there and that can communicate very quickly and very effectively in a short period of time. Down there on the field, there are a lot of things going on and you have to be able to trust that communication and chain of command. I think it's different. I would like to talk to Dan (Werner) a little bit more about where he feels most comfortable at and go from there."

"To be honest with you, I'm not sure where I plan to call (plays) from. I did like it. With it being so different, it will take some getting used to. If that's the best thing for our staff and players, then there's no question that's what I'm going to do. I think one thing that Coach Muschamp does a great job of is in the summer, having scrimmages be like games. So, I can get an actual view of doing them both. It does

help me a lot to see it a little bit better upstairs. So right now that's what I'm thinking."

On his familiarity with Dan Werner...

BM: "I haven't really crossed paths with him. Other than in recruiting, where you kind of cross paths with everybody. In the SEC, you bump shoulders with everybody. Everybody is recruiting the same areas, so you meet people. I didn't get a real good chance to sit down and talk with him until he came over here and visited, and then we've had phone conversations and stayed in constant communication ever since. I am really, really excited about working with the guy. (He's) a guy that's done it at such a high level. He's led the conference in pretty much every statistical category that you can as a play-caller. When you've got a guy that – one – he's just a good person. He values the right things. He values making a good man more so than making a good football player, because one takes care of the next. So when you have a guy who prioritizes the right stuff and has the offensive knowledge that he has, I think it's a win-win, and I'm excited about bringing him here on the offensive staff. Because I do feel like we have a really good offensive staff that knows a lot of ball and has done it at a high level for a long time. So I think he's going to be a huge addition, but I am so excited about working with – and Coach (Muschamp) said it – it's like having a sounding board. It's no secret that I worked at Georgia for awhile, and Coach (Mark) Richt was Mike Bobo's sounding board when he was calling plays. Coach Muschamp is (Travaris Robinson's) sounding board. He can say 'hey, I see what you're seeing. You might want to try a different way, because I tried it like this and it didn't turn out so well.' It can just help you through some things. That's why I'm excited about working with him."

On the changes that will be implemented in the offensive scheme...

BM: "I think Coach (Muschamp) mentioned it. There might be one or two things that you'll see that will be noticeably different. I do think this: every coach right now is going through the same thing, because you're getting a brand-new team. You've got guys leaving. You've got new guys coming in. The biggest challenge is just trying to figure out where all the pieces fit right now. Like you said, we're going to have some shuffling to make sure we've got our best five offensive linemen out there on the field. We don't know who that is going to be yet. So everybody is kind of falling into line there. So to answer your question, the only thing we can do or that I'm going to promise you is that we are going to play to our strengths. What those will be, I think time will tell."

On his experience formulating an offensive strategy in preparation of becoming an offensive coordinator on day...

BM: "I think it never stops. It never stops. You're constantly seeing stuff and constantly looking. That's not just me, I think. That's everybody who does well in any profession. They want to constantly grow. I am constantly looking. I've already talked to Coach (Muschamp) about some people I want to go and visit with. This was before all of this coordinator stuff even happened, just so I can constantly grow, and you can never stop growing."

On how many people were interviewed for the open offensive coordinator job...

WM: "Numerous."

More than five?

WM: "Yes."

More than ten?

WM: "Probably not ten. (laughs) Why is that so important?"

On keeping Bryan McClendon on staff and if that impacted the hiring of the new offensive coordinator...

WM: "No, not at all. Hiring the best coach for this position was the most important thing. Whether it was going to be Bryan, or whoever it was, that was the most important thing."

On how big a role recruiting played in the hire of Bryan McClendon and if recruiting territories have been decided...

WM: "The most important thing was hiring the best offensive coordinator for the University of South Carolina. Let's make that extremely clear. We have not really talked in terms of obviously adding another coach to the staff or what recruiting areas we will have. We had some ideas, but I'd rather get those in cement before we can talk about them. Adding another coach, what will their value be in recruiting areas and different things, we'll go through that."

On potential changes in staffing or student-athletes...

WM: "I do not anticipate any more staffing changes. We've got a January 15th team meeting. That night, our staff will be out recruiting. Jeff Dillman and Maria Hickman, our academic coordinator, will run that meeting. At this time, no one has talked to me, player or coach, about not being apart of our team going forward."

On the rationale of moving Bobby Bentley back to running backs coach and hiring Dan Werner as quarterbacks coach...

WM: "I think the wealth of knowledge that Dan has had in our league at a very high level as a quarterback developer and play-caller was really important. To me, it's all about fit. How do things fit and how do they work together? You look at our defensive staff: (Travaris Robinson) is a defensive back guy. Lance (Thompson) has been with us; he understands how we play up front. Mike Peterson has been with us. He understands how we're going to play and how we're going to coach things up front. Coleman Hutzler understands at linebacker how we want things called, taught and coached. To me it's all about fit, and I felt like Dan was the best fit for us. Certainly, Bobby's more than qualified."

On how the recruiting focus changes with the promotion of Bryan McClendon...

WM: "It really doesn't. During the season, at times, position coaches may go out on a Friday night, and I go out on Friday nights, to recruit. I don't want the coordinators

going out because we have meetings and walkthroughs and such with our team. Generally, my rule of thumb is that the special teams coordinator, the offensive coordinator, the defensive coordinator and both line coaches don't go out on a Friday night. Other than that, it doesn't change anything. He'll be on the road just as much as anyone else, as much as myself or anybody else on our staff."

On the offensive adjustments in the Outback Bowl...

WM: "I think that was a huge comfort level for me to see the adjustments made. We were having a hard time blocking. I'll let (Bryan McClendon) go through schematically some different things we did protection-wise to get the ball on the perimeter in the run game more. To continue to stay with the tempo. You can't freak out after three-and-out. At the end of the day, that's part of it. You've got to be able to. I thought we had some drives in the first half. We had the exchange issue with A.J. (Turner) and Jake (Bentley). We eliminated one possession offensively with the punt return (fumble). Chris (Lammons) thought the ball hit Javon Charleston. He tried to get the ball, so we eliminated a possession for us there. Again, the adjustments I thought were outstanding in order for us to have an opportunity to win the game. You know what? If your players don't believe in what you're doing, we don't win that game. Our players believed in what we were doing. That affords you to win a game. There goes now back to the intangible qualities that a coach can bring to the table for you."

BM: "As far as the adjustments, Coach (Muschamp) said it. That was no secret. We kind of struggled with just blocking those guys. They were really, really, really good up front. We knew it going in. They're not a top-five defense in the country for no reason at all. (I) just knew that we were going to have to kind of keep punching. That we were going to have to keep the tempo up. As far as what we had to do, I knew we had to start getting the ball on the perimeter a little bit more. The one saving grace that we had was that they weren't scoring. It wasn't like they were running up points on us, so I knew we could stay patient and get the ball on the perimeter and not have to feel like we needed chunk yardage right away."

"As far as protection changes, I did have to go to some more seven-man protections and more slot protections. Not as much man protection where that guy had that guy. He could always get help from somebody inside. No matter what, we could do that and then take advantage of some shots outside. I knew if we were going to run the ball, we kind of had to do it in a hurry as well. Do it at a fast tempo. Other than that, that was kind of it. We got to express that to the guys. They knew that it was going to be. That's why the games are four quarters. They're not one-and-a-half. They're not one-and-three-quarters. You've got to play all four, and our guys believed in that. They knew that somebody was going to half to make a play and our guys did."

On offseason player surgeries and injuries...

WM: "Bryson (Allen-Williams) will not go through spring. Jamyest Williams will not go through spring. We did have two postseason surgeries. Mon Denson had a cleanup on his knee. He might be pushing it. They think he's going to be out six

weeks. He might be pushing it. Donell Stanley had surgery on his knee, which is a cleanup. He'll be fine. He'll be back working out in January. Bryson will not go through spring. Deebo (Samuel), he'll be fine for spring."

On the excitement of working with the returning veteran receivers...

BM: "Well, it's exciting. This is the one time that we'll actually be able to play with some true veterans, with Bryan Edwards being there, being a three-year starter. Deebo (Samuel) coming back, being a three-year starter. Shi (Smith), OrTre (Smith), Chad (Terrell), Chavis (Dawkins) – all those guys played significant time. Even the young guys with the talent level that I feel like we're bringing in, now we have quality depth where we can constantly kind of roll people and keep playing fast out there. It's exciting knowing what we have. Like I said, it's not a bunch of first-time starters out there. It'll be (like that) for the first time in a couple years."

On his play-calling mindset during the Outback Bowl...

BM: "I constantly was trying to search for ways just to try to make sure our guys could succeed out there. We felt like we had a couple different things that we could take advantage of. The biggest thing was just knowing those guys were good. They were good. And then we had to keep everybody positive. That was just my thing. Just saying to all the coaches that were down on the field, 'hey man, make sure we're staying positive with these guys. Know that, hey man we've got to keep punching it. Something's going to break, man. We've just got to keep going and make our plays.' Let's not help them like we were trying to do I felt like in the first half. I felt like we were kind of doing some things that helped them out a little bit."

On the progression of his coaching career and if he has the goal of becoming a head coach one day...

BM: "Ultimately, I think a lot of people have goals and aspirations to be a head coach. To answer that question, I think eventually. The one thing I did learn as being the interim head coach (at Georgia for the 2016 Taxslayer Bowl) is that no matter what, you're not ready. No matter what progression you go through in the coaching ranks, whether it's from position coach to head coach or coordinator to head coach, there's still so much that you don't learn until you get there. I'm excited about this opportunity. When Coach (Muschamp) came to me and told me I was calling (plays) for the bowl game, people asked me how I felt then. It's the same way I feel about it now. I think it's truly a blessing. You get guys that go through their whole coaching career and never get an opportunity like this. The only thing I was focused on is just making sure I did a good job taking care of that blessing that I had. Now, I'm doing the same thing now. That's what I've done my whole coaching career. Wherever that leads me, I think I'm fine with that. Right now, that's the goal."

On his role as an African-American coordinator at a major university...

BM: "I just now think it's truly a blessing. It really is. It says a lot about not just me. It says a lot about Coach Muschamp. His comfort level with everything, too. This is a big hire for him. Just saying what it is. This is a big hire for him. Not just him. It's a big hire for the University of South Carolina. Just placing that trust in me I think is

really important, kind of regardless of whatever it is. I think it's truly a blessing. I'm proud to be here. (I) just have to do a good job of taking care of all the day-to-day stuff."

On the impact of mid-year enrollees...

WM: "I was talking to Bryan (McClendon) the other day. Offensively, we're going to have Josh Vann, Tyquan Johnson and Jovaughn Gwyn. There needs to be another offensive lineman involved in that group. (Only) four guys that will not go through spring. Our entire offense will go through spring ball because of the mid-year enrollees. Defensively, (we have) Jabari Ellis, Jonathan Gipson, Jaycee Horn and one other that won't go through spring. There better be another d-lineman in that group too. Because of the mid-year enrollees, all of these guys are going to go through spring ball, which is huge in the development part of it. It's changed because as Bryan (McClendon) said earlier, you're starting on the 2019 class and the 2020 class. You're getting further ahead on those guys. You're going to get better evaluations in January on the younger classes, because you're not spending as much time on the 2018 class. We're going to have 13 mid-year guys on campus right now. That's what's changed a little bit for the good in my opinion."

On reports that Bryan McClendon had offers to leave South Carolina...

BM: "I'll say this: however it happened, I'm glad. I'm glad that we're all where we are right now. I'm happy to be here at South Carolina. I'm happy to be the offensive coordinator and an assistant coach here at South Carolina."

WM: "Just because they put it on the Internet doesn't mean it's true."

On how the absence of Deebo Samuel and how it let other players mature faster...

BM: "I think we made huge strides. What it did was it forced some guys to grow up quicker. In my group, you could see it. Not just my group; I thought sometimes offensively a little bit we kind of just waited around and thought 'Oh, Deebo will get us out of it.' When that happened. Now, we couldn't do that. It made a Bryan Edwards step up. It made Jake (Bentley) have to trust other people. It made Hayden (Hurst) step up. It made OrTre (Smith) and Shi Smith have to step up and not be freshmen anymore, so to speak. I think it helped us overall with the development of all the other pieces that are around him. Obviously, getting him back is huge. Getting the playmaking ability back is huge. I think it grew a lot of people up."

On the low drop rate this season for the wide receivers...

BM: "We put a lot of pressure on the guys to catch the football here. We put a lot of pressure on them. You could ask Coach (Muschamp). You see my guys doing up-downs after practice. We got up-downs for every drop we have in the group. We have five up-downs for every drop. That's everybody. If one person drops, that means the whole group has five. It goes up from there. I tell them, 'If you can't handle the pressure I put on you to catch it out there at practice, it's going to be hard for you to handle the pressure of catching a football in a game.' I think that's kind of

overall. You've got to put pressure on them. That's what practice is for. It's to help sharpen up guys for the game. We put a huge emphasis on it. I hate that you asked me about it. Now we're going to go out there and have five drops in a game. (laughs) No, but we put a huge emphasis on it."